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ABSTRACT

In view of the relative absence of Spanish-speaking personnel at area health care delivery sites, Northampton County Area Community College (NCACC), with financial and administrative support from Lehigh Valley Manpower Organization (a Comprehensive Employment and Training Act agency) and input from the Council of Spanish Speaking Organizations of the Lehigh Valley, implemented a bilingual nurse's aide training program designed to impart bilingual Hispanics with the vocabulary and skills of a nurse's aide. The six week course, taught by two bilingual nurses in the summer of 1979, was based on two texts: "The Nurse Assistant" by Donovan, et al., and a specially prepared 40-page syllabus. Major instructional topics included communications and interpersonal relationships; hospital environment and safety; positioning and exercise; surgical asepsis; and observation, recording, and reporting. The students, who met the qualifications of bilingualism, literacy, local residency, extended unemployment, and financial exigency, were instructed Monday through Thursday at the college's nursing laboratory. Clinical experience was provided each Friday at the county convalescent home. Besides access to the usual college services, students were provided with day care and transportation support. Of the 16 students enrolled, 15 completed the program and subsequently took part in an eight-week hospital practicum. (JP)

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A Successful Training Program for Bilingual (Spanish/English) Nurse Aides

by Leonard F. O'Hara

INTRODUCTION. As the size and strength of the Nation's Hispanic population grows, so will its demands for access to health care. Among the more serious obstacles to such services is the near absence of professionals at the health care setting who understand the language and cultural background which Hispanic patients bring. Unless someone is available who can help the patient to explain his symptoms or to interpret the things which the nurse or doctor is saying, the non-English speaking person is unlikely to seek the care that he needs. Eventually there will be sufficient numbers of bilingual doctors, nurses, dentists and technicians; meanwhile, an extremely eager and well-suited group of citizens stands ready and able to fill the void. There are numerous bilingual Hispanics who, in a comparatively short period, can be taught the vocabulary and skills of a nurse aide. Once trained, the graduates can be employed in any number of health care settings. By combining the skills and

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professionalism which a good training program can impart with their cultural and linguistic talents, these individuals can provide a valuable service.

One successful Bilingual Nurse Aide training program was conducted through the combined efforts of a community college, a regional manpower (CETA) agency, and a local organization for Spanish Speaking persons. The program was first offered during the summer of 1979. In 1980, an improved version was implemented.

COMBINING FORCES. One of the more notable features of the *NORTHAMPTON COUNTY AREA COMMUNITY COLLEGE BILINGUAL NURSE AIDE PROGRAM (BNA)* is its usefulness as a model for other cooperative efforts between diverse service institutions. The Council of Spanish Speaking Organizations of the Lehigh Valley (CSSO) came up with the idea of training persons in a health-related field and later assisted in the recruitment of potential students. The Lehigh Valley Manpower (LVMP) organization coordinated the program and paid for it, and the college contributed its extensive expertise in the training of health care professionals by devising and offering the program of study and locating an agency wherein trainees could gain clinical experiences during the six-week course. The first time that the course was offered, LVMP contracted with a local hospital to give the graduates an eight-week follow-up experience. All future programs will integrate the training into a seven-week on-campus, five-week hospital offering under the exclusive control of the college. The critical ingredient in the success of the program was the recognition by all agencies that the program was necessary and worthwhile not only for the students but also for the Hispanic citizens of the region who would someday need health care.

DEVELOPING THE INSTRUCTIONAL COMPONENT. Since it had already been decided that all trainees were to be bilingual, it followed that the course instructors

would have to speak and understand both languages as well. Fortunately, one of the members of the full-time nursing faculty met that qualification and so was hired to serve as the lead teacher. Through its contact with CSSO, the college found a second bilingual master's-trained nurse to assist in classroom and clinical supervision. Together with the project director, these instructors developed all curricular aspects of the program.

Instruction took place five days a week for six weeks. Monday through Thursday the students were on-campus in the college nursing laboratory and the five and one-half hours each day were divided equally between lecture/demonstration and practice. On Fridays, students spent an eight-hour day at the county convalescent home.

The course was based on two works: The Nurse Assistant[1] by Donovan, et al and a forty-page course syllabus--study guide written by the two NCACC instructors. This in-house English/Spanish "text" has since been edited by the college's language department and is available to any interested party for the price of production and handling. The major instructional topics included: orientation; communication and the interpersonal relationship; hospital environment and safety; medical asepsis and isolation; nutritional needs; body mechanics, positioning and exercise; personal care needs; oxygen needs; elimination needs, intake and output; surgical asepsis, bandages, binders and applications of heat and cold; admission, discharge and assisting with the physical examination; observation, recording and reporting. All instruction, including clinical supervision, daily oral quizzes and weekly tests was conducted in both languages.

[1] Donovan, J., Belsjoe, E., and Dillion, D. *THE NURSE ASSISTANT.* New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1978.

OTHER ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE COLLEGE. Under the LVMP contract, the college provided more than instruction. Some of these services included: *Transportation.* NCACC leased a bus and employed a driver Monday through Friday for the duration of the program. The bus picked up students at various locations throughout the Valley and arrived at the school before 8 a.m. On Fridays, the students were transported directly to the clinical facility. *Child Care.* Dependent children between the ages of 3 and 10 were cared for at the college's Child Development Center on campus. The children accompanied their parents on the bus. *Clinical Experience.* The college entered into a contractual agreement with the County Convalescent Home. This allowed trainees to practice their nurse aide skills in a health care setting. The contract was not unlike those already in existance between NCACC and many area hospitals. *Student Services.* Once enrolled, the BNA class members were given access to every student service; among these were career and personal counseling, educational testing, tutoring and financial aid information, guidance in interview techniques, resume writing and securing employment. Follow-up placement services have been made available on a continuing basis.

THE STUDENTS. Through the combined efforts of LVMP and CSSO, twenty-five potential students were found. Each of these women met the manpower-imposed qualifications of local residency, extended unemployment and financial exigency. The college requirements were a minimum age of seventeen and an ability to speak and read Spanish and English. From the group, the instructors accepted sixteen. For the next six weeks the students, most of whom had not finished high school (several having dropped out of school in junior high), were put through a rigorous program. The results exceeded even the most optimistic predictions.

Fifteen students completed the six-week program, each performing like a seasoned professional by the end of the course. All volunteered to take part in the eight-week hospital experience which followed. Instructor evaluations showed remarkable progress and the Director of Nursing at the County Home expressed a willingness to employ any member of the class. Most gratifying were the increases in confidence and self-esteem experienced by each participant and the positive reactions of the faculty and convalescent home personnel. Before leaving the college and going on to the work experience, the students were awarded a nurse aide pin and certificate of completion at a formal graduation ceremony.

THE HOSPITAL WORK EXPERIENCE AND SUBSEQUENT EMPLOYMENT. The eight-week CETA-subsidized hospital training which followed gave the graduates an opportunity to function as nurse aides. Although the college was not directly involved in this portion of the experience, contact was maintained through weekly visits by the project director. In addition, one of the NCACC instructors was employed by the hospital to coordinate the training. As mentioned above, the college has since revised the course by increasing the on-campus session to seven weeks, reducing the hospital portion to five weeks and placing control over *all* instruction in its own hands.

OUTCOMES. The Hispanic citizens of the Lehigh Valley now have fifteen newly-trained persons who are willing and able to assist them in obtaining health care. Persons living in the same neighborhoods as these Bilingual Nurse Aides have someone close by who can help them to understand and be understood whenever medical attention is needed. Moreover, the entire graduating class has gained in self-confidence as a result of the training. That they have acquired new and useful knowledge and that a few have considered a nursing career are also no mean achievements. That several are or have been working as nurse aides is extremely encouraging.

CONCLUSION. Hispanic persons are reluctant to make use of health care services due to the relative absence of Spanish-speaking persons at the delivery site. By training bilingual persons as nurse aides, this deficiency can be remedied quickly. The Bilingual Nurse Aide Program at Northampton County Area Community College, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania has demonstrated that, by making use of the special interests and expertise of a variety of community service agencies, qualified individuals can be produced. Now that the pitfalls have been uncovered and methods of avoiding them devised, there is every reason to believe that future classes will reach even greater levels of achievement.

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